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REPORT OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

Addendum*

Annex I

Compendium of proposals for action

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* The present document contains annex I to the report of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, which was held at Yokohama from 23 to 27 May 1994. The complete report will subsequently be issued in final form as a sales publication of the United Nations.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The rising scale, number and complexity of disasters challenge the world community to adopt comprehensive and innovative approaches to coping with disasters. The brunt of disasters is borne by vulnerable groups, particularly the poor and socially disadvantaged groups in developing countries. The World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction brought together policy makers, scientists and technicians for the first time to forge new and comprehensive strategies to deal with disasters. The Conference noted that:

(a) Disaster reduction must be integrated into sustainable development policies. The key to such integration is to incorporate disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness activities into development plans and activities;

(b) Each country bears the primary responsibility for protecting its people from disasters. The emphasis should be upon building national and local capacities to cope with disasters in vulnerable groups and communities. Disaster management efforts should include government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations;

(c) Regional and international cooperation is needed to build a global "preventive culture" of disaster management. Regional and international institutions provide valuable support to countries in building their capacities to deal with disasters. Regional and international mechanisms also provide a means to discuss, standardize, exchange and promote disaster management concepts, approaches and tools;

(d) Countries should view the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World as a call to action and to use the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) as a catalyst for change. During the second half of the Decade, IDNDR serves as a framework and stimulus to develop integrated practical mechanisms and procedures for disaster management. It serves as a bridge to integrate relief and development. The second world conference on natural disaster reduction, called for at the end of the decade, provides countries and the international community with an opportunity to build the blocks for a concerted approach to disaster management for the twenty-first century. For while the Decade lasts only 10 years, the issues related to disasters, development and environment will continue well beyond.

A. Follow-up to the Conference

National level

2. National disaster management and development authorities are requested to update and develop their capacities for identifying risks, vulnerabilities at national and local levels. They should involve non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in the process of developing programmes for promotion of disaster reduction and should use IDNDR mechanisms for support. The national committees should, during the second half of the Decade, have a more active role and should function at the national and local levels with regard to implementation of disaster reduction programmes and projects.

Regional level

3. As recommended by the World Conference, greater emphasis will be placed on regional cooperation that promotes networking between countries on issues related to disaster management and sustainable development. National, regional and international institutions will be identified and supported in this work towards building regional networks to support the development of country programmes that incorporate disaster reduction.

International level

4. The United Nations and related agencies are requested to develop and update their "sectoral" programme priorities for disaster management in line with the recommendations and outcome of the World Conference. They should focus particularly on integrating elements of the disaster management cycle, including preparedness, relief, rehabilitation, recovery, mitigation, prevention and sustainable development.

5. The above actions to be undertaken by the participants in the IDNDR will be supported by the bodies composing the mechanisms created for the Decade, i.e. the Special High-level Council (SHLC), the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) and the secretariat. In order to do so, the advisory functions of SHLC and STC will need to be consolidated, and the structure and capacity of the secretariat reinforced.

B. Resource strategies

6. To implement the 1995 programme and to build a long-term source of human and financial resources, national, regional and international bodies are called upon to undertake the following strategies:

(a) Human and material resources: To create agreements between donors and recipients to build a network of experts and institutions for prevention, mitigation and preparedness that can be called upon by Governments and international bodies for risk assessments, technical advice, training, promotion etc.;

(b) Financing related to disaster management: To establish procedures to ensure that funds for emergency relief are accompanied by funding of rehabilitation activities in the disaster-stricken area, which will initiate disaster reduction measures;

(c) Financing related to sustainable development: To develop legislation, protocols and financing mechanisms for disaster reduction so that measures are incorporated into development programmes from the planning phase of each project, and to ensure self-reliance and long-term sustainable development.

II. PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

A. Programme development

7. This document outlines the IDNDR programme during the next year until the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. It is the first result of the statements during the World Conference, the plenary, the main and technical committees. The detailed project proposals, which have been received by the IDNDR secretariat, are being incorporated in a compendium of IDNDR projects, which shall be kept updated and made available to interested parties.

8. The Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action provide a mid-term review of the Decade and recommendations for the next five years. The recommendations indicate that countries should strengthen their capacities for disaster management and should focus on promotion, information and communication in the field of disaster reduction, and that the IDNDR should support these actions. The programme should not only involve national Governments and United Nations bodies but also include NGOs, the private and business sectors. A strengthened IDNDR programme must promote the integration of disaster reduction into national and local programmes for sustainable development, in particular through relevant capacity-building, institutional and legal arrangements and prioritized funding mechanisms.

9. The Strategy and Plan of Action also indicate that regional disaster reduction programmes should be established, which would lead to country programmes and benefit from the exchange of experiences within the region. Priority should be given to reducing risks to vulnerable communities. The role of "grass-roots" organizations is important in this respect. Capacities to evaluate disaster reduction programmes should be strengthened. Systematic pre- and post-disaster evaluations should be carried out. IDNDR will propose mechanisms to stimulate those actions during the next year.

B. Policy and strategy

10. During the technical sessions held at the Conference it was agreed that (a) during the second half of the Decade the emphasis should focus more on small communities, the causes of their vulnerability and the endeavours needed to identify and address those causes; (b) the disproportionately high burden carried by women in disasters must be recognized and addressed in national and local disaster preparedness planning; (c) non-governmental organizations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and other community-based groups needed to be involved more fully in the second half of the Decade must be addressed; and (d) disaster preparedness planning must take into account the amplifying effect that conflict has upon the suffering triggered by natural hazards.

11. Future activities should give particular priority to (a) providing fully a clear sequence of activities for each disaster type (or scenario) treated; (b) systematic lesson-learning from case studies; (c) wider exchange of experiences between countries; (d) special analysis of problems of fast-growing cities; (e) full evaluation of socio-economic consequences of disaster; (f) better cost-effectiveness studies on preventive measures; (g) emphasis on low-cost and easily applied corrective measures; and (h) transfer of technology to improve early warning systems. In order to achieve the practical application and implementation of these recommendations, the coordination of policy development for disaster reduction needs to be strengthened, based on systematic

evaluation of "lessons learned". Crisis management and relief bodies must, as a matter of urgency, assist in using the opportunities created by disasters to set into motion the disaster reduction activities.

III. ACTION

A. National and local levels

12. The recommendations of the Main Committee regarding the interface between the public and private sector and voluntary organizations stress the need to strengthen the partnership between these sectors.

National and local governments

13. It is the prime responsibility of national and local governments to ensure the safety of their citizens. They should pay attention to the large number of national and local government organizations and institutions that are normally involved in risk reduction. The essential task of the national and local governments is to recognize that potential, respond to initiatives, allocate responsibilities, coordinate effort where necessary, and formalize partnerships. It is also important for governments to provide a lead by setting an example of disaster management in all that they do. This interaction will be most important between national and local governments. IDNDR will make every effort to assist national and local governments in the execution of this crucial task.

Private sector

14. The private sector is attaching increasing attention to the issue of reducing natural disasters. Private companies are beginning to reformulate the notion of risk management, taking into account the consequences of severe natural events. This is also the result of a new attitude of the private sector towards the "public interest" of reducing the impact of natural disasters. After the World Conference, the public sector at large and the United Nations system in particular have a unique opportunity to start a fruitful cooperation with industry on disaster-related issues. The private sector is - like any other segment of society - a victim of disasters. But at the same time the private sector is often the most active source of technology and innovation for coping with natural hazards. For this reason private companies represent a valuable stock of resources in terms of technology, know-how and financial support which must be mobilized. Insurance, construction, transport, agriculture and telecommunication have particular interest in disaster reduction.

Non-governmental organizations

15. Sufficient and qualified manpower and institutions are needed, not only at the governmental but also at "grass-roots" levels to develop local disaster reduction plans. The non-governmental sector and community associations can play an important role locally. Strong NGO "networks" need to be developed in disaster-prone countries to improve the dialogue with the national government and to assure a frequent and systematic exchange of experience at the local and grass-roots levels. An important step in this direction was the establishment of a NGO Coordination Group during the World Conference.

Institutions

16. The capacities of national and local research and training institutions need to be inventoried, and these capacities should be directed towards national and local disaster reduction planning and implementation. Inter-university programmes between developing and developed countries should be promoted.

Media

17. The World Conference also highlighted the importance of good contacts with the media, as part of the promotional activities, and emphasized collaboration between media representatives and disaster management professionals to encourage and facilitate better coverage of disaster reduction activities. Special audio-visual programmes need to be developed together with the media to address the various aspects of disaster reduction. During the next two years special attention will be given to the protection of vulnerable communities, as recommended by the Conference.

Research

18. Special attention needs to be given to disaster reduction in small and large cities. National research programmes will be needed to address early warning, disaster preparedness, crisis management and post-disaster reconstruction. Special attention will be given to synthesize plans that exist and to determine obstacles in implementing them.

Information and communication

19. For the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action the exchange of information between local, national and regional organizations and individuals needs to be improved, with particular emphasis on establishing and providing easy access to information systems that support planning and management and on information regarding ongoing disaster reduction activities and disaster reduction needs in developing countries.

B. Regional level

20. The World Conference emphasized the importance of regional programmes within which country programmes could be developed. Regional organizations could play a crucial role in assisting countries to include disaster reduction in sustainable development plans through the promotion of good examples in the region. Special resolutions in this regard have already been adopted by some regional commissions. Interregional organizations should support and mobilize resources for disaster reduction.

Regional centres

21. Regional centres will be strengthened to support local and national disaster reduction activities. Their task will be to support a network of national institutions beyond that which can be provided by global programmes and to facilitate linkages in this network.

Regional networks of institutions and experts

22. The development of regional and subregional networks, bringing political decision makers, planning and other technical and scientific professionals together, is an important part of IDNDR's strategy to assure regional exchange. IDNDR has over the years developed access to scientific and technical information regarding institutional and individual capabilities.

Regional programme development

23. Regional workshops are considered an important mechanism to stimulate regional programme development. Such workshops are being implemented towards the end of 1994 and 1995. These regional initiatives will lead to comprehensive regional programmes and activities for implementation during the second half of the Decade.

C. International level

24. The IDNDR secretariat with the Special High-level Council and the Scientific and Technical Committee will work in close coordination with the United Nations system, NGOs, the scientific community, financial institutions, and the private sector. Emphasis shall be placed on networking, awareness raising, training, research, publications, technology transfer, preparedness and prevention.

United Nations system

25. The cooperation with various United Nations bodies has significantly contributed to successes during the first half of the Decade. The mechanisms for cooperation will continue to be developed. Cooperation with regional United Nations organizations and at the national level has also contributed to this success. The mandate and responsibilities of the IDNDR Inter-Agency Steering Committee and its Working Group should be expanded to reflect Conference recommendations to build long-term mechanisms to coordinate, communicate and streamline disaster reduction activities.

Scientific community

26. Various scientists, and scientific unions or institutions have played a vital and supportive role in the development of the Decade. Projects implemented by the scientific community are being promoted within the framework of the Decade. Application of the results of scientific research and the transfer of appropriate knowledge and technology are among the priorities of the Decade. Priority will be given to research focused on reducing risks to vulnerable communities. The Scientific and Technical Committee assisted in formulating the programmes of the Decade. The promotion of a number of illustrative projects is an important component of the overall programme framework. The objective of these illustrative programmes and projects is to provide good examples to people who are involved in disaster reduction in disaster-prone countries.

Financial institutions

27. IDNDR will promote private and public investment in disaster reduction. For this purpose financial institutions at the international, regional and national levels will be actively approached to include disaster reduction as part of their investment plans. The dialogue with them should focus on obstacles to incorporating disaster reduction and how they can be overcome. Concerted approaches with agencies, NGOs, companies and scientists in this regard will be explored. Earmarking special funds for disaster reduction before development plans are implemented in disaster-prone regions would be beneficial both to investors and vulnerable communities. The social and economic cost-effectiveness of disaster reduction will be stressed in the promotional campaigns towards these institutions.

IV. PROGRAMME COORDINATION

A. Decade mechanisms

1. Special High-level Council and Scientific and Technical Committee

28. While the objective and goals contained in the International Framework of Action for the IDNDR (Assembly resolution 44/236) and the targets for the Decade endorsed by the General Assembly (Assembly resolution 46/149) remain the guiding principles of the Decade, the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action puts the emphasis on critical gaps identified, based on the assessment of progress made in the field of natural disaster reduction halfway through the Decade. Therefore, the mechanism created for the Decade (Special High-level Council (SHLC), Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) and the secretariat) obviously needs to be adapted. The STC has fulfilled a valuable role during the first half of the Decade in promoting and identifying fields of action, defining targets and programmes, promoting national committees, recommending actions, mobilizing the scientific community etc. There should be a balance of specialists, including media experts, and representatives from the private sector and NGOs. The tasks of the SHLC need to be revised, and it is proposed to consolidate the functions of the SHLC with those of the STC. The members of this consolidated composition should represent the interested parties, including donors and beneficiaries, and political and financial interests, notably those disaster-prone and donor countries which are active in the field of disaster reduction, media, NGOs, private sector as well as the scientific community.

2. National IDNDR committees

29. Among the many national IDNDR committees some have experienced difficulties in performing their role effectively. The national IDNDR committees should, during the second half of the Decade, have a more active role and function in the implementation of disaster reduction programmes and projects. The national IDNDR committees should include representation from the relevant sectors: public administration, the financial sector, the scientific community, planners, media and private sector. The new SHLC and STC will be asked to become more directly involved with support to national committees. Closer cooperation between national committees and United Nations disaster management teams is further advocated.

3. IDNDR secretariat

30. The IDNDR secretariat, integrated in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, will continue to coordinate IDNDR activities of all Decade partners, including the United Nations system, NGOs, and the public and private sector. The IDNDR secretariat shall facilitate network-building, particularly at the global and regional levels, lead advocacy and awareness-raising efforts for an integrated approach to management, and identify and promote relevant research, technology, preparedness plans, training, publications etc. related to disaster reduction.

B. Activity streams

31. The programme framework reflects the proposals made for implementation of the outcome of the Yokohama Conference, and refers to four major activity streams, briefly described below:

(a) Promotion: IDNDR will need the involvement of public information and communication professionals to study the implications of the World Conference and to develop a post-conference public information strategy. Where the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action fit, they should be put on the agenda of conferences, meetings and workshops. Information materials, including press features and audio-visuals, need to be made available to the media covering relevant conferences and seminars. The production and use of audio-visuals should more actively promote disaster reduction. As discussed during the round-table meeting during the Conference, support is required for the creation of documentation centres on disaster reduction.

(b) Information and communication systems: Following the recommendations of the World Conference, the IDNDR will also strengthen capacities in the field of information systems development and the exchange of information world wide between organizations and individuals on disaster reduction. Emphasis should be placed on improving information and communication technology and on identifying the required means of meeting the needs, possibly from international sources of funding, expertise or other resources.

(c) Knowledge and technology: For the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action the IDNDR will strengthen capacities in the promotion, methodology development, coordination and application of research and evaluation. Emphasis will be put on the application of existing knowledge and technology.

(d) Management and coordination: For the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action the IDNDR will strengthen capabilities for project development, management, monitoring and coordination, with particular regard to the regional level, in close collaboration with IDNDR national committees. Liaison with donors and recipient countries, inter-agency coordination and cooperation in the field of disaster reduction, cooperation with the private sector and NGOs will be enhanced.

V. RESOURCE STRATEGIES

32. Human, material and financial resources will be needed for disaster reduction programmes. Most resources are needed for project planning and implementation at the national and local levels. Resources will also be needed at the regional level. For the implementation of international projects the required funding is comparatively small, but it is important for the improvement of policies and the quality of implementation.

Human and material resources

33. Inventories and development of human resources in disaster reduction will be needed at the regional, national and local levels. Human resources need to be identified in governmental organizations, scientific institutions, the private sector and NGOs. Training programmes are an important mechanism for human resource development and for the identification of available expertise in the field of disaster reduction. Material resources for programme development will be identified, inter alia, in the information and telecommunication sectors.

Financing related to disaster management

34. Potential sources of funding may be identified through donor meetings. Thorough studies are required to identify other, more innovative, approaches such as promoting low-cost measures for reducing the impact of future disasters. The result of this exploration should lead to a strategic allocation of a percentage of international humanitarian aid funding for the reduction of natural disasters. In this respect it is recommended that disaster reduction be included as a permanent section in disaster situation reports.

Financing related to sustainable development

35. Other sources of funding may be found through the identification of longer-term savings through disaster reduction activities, i.e. legislation, protocols and financing mechanisms to ensure that disaster reduction measures are incorporated into development programmes from the planning phase of each project. The private and business sectors also need to be involved. National fund-raising campaigns within developing countries could also be initiated and stimulated, with possible counter-contributions from the traditional donor institutions. Attention should also be given to the role of the formal and informal insurance institutions in this respect.